

FOR NPS USE ONLY

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Pontiac Building

AND/OR COMMON

Pontiac Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

542 South Dearborn

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

— VICINITY OF

7th

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Illinois

COOE

17

COUNTY

Cook

CODE

031

Cardiss Collins

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

— DISTRICT

— PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

— AGRICULTURE

— MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

— UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

— PARK

— STRUCTURE

— BOTH

— WORK IN PROGRESS

— EDUCATIONAL

— PRIVATE RESIDENCE

— SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

— ENTERTAINMENT

— RELIGIOUS

— OBJECT

— IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

— GOVERNMENT

— SCIENTIFIC

— BEING CONSIDERED

— YES: UNRESTRICTED

— INDUSTRIAL

— TRANSPORTATION

— NO

— MILITARY

— OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Michigan Avenue National Bank Tr. # 1073

STREET & NUMBER

30 North Michigan Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds, Cook County

STREET & NUMBER

118 North Clark Street

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Landmarks Preservation Council and Service Inventory

DATE

1974

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Landmarks Preservation Council

CITY, TOWN

407 South Dearborn, Chicago

STATE

Illinois

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks
Local
1972
320 North Clark Street, Room 800, Chicago, Illinois

Illinois Historic Structures Survey
state
1972
1800 South Prairie Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Historic American Building Survey
national
1960
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.

77 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This fourteen story building with a skeletal steel frame covers the entire southern end of one of the "thin slab" blocks and has important facades on three streets.

The top twelve stories are enclosed by a tight brick skin stretched tautly around the corners. Along the top floor and on the outer edges of the south facade the windows are cut cleanly into the skin. Elsewhere the skin pushes outward to form tiers of unadorned bay windows. On the north and south ends of the broad Dearborn and Federal Street facades these span two bays but, in contrast, only a single bay in their centers, a motif repeated in the center of the narrower south facade. A contrast to the distinct verticality of the tiered windows and a reminder of the skeletal frame within is given by a single course of lighter colored terra cotta that follows the brick skin at the level of the window heads.

The lower two stories form a bottom zone. Each floor is unique in design and function. They survive in virtually unaltered condition. The ground level contains broad, expansive windows which provide excellent light and visibility for the commercial spaces behind them. On the north end of the Dearborn Street facade is a simple entrance to the elevator lobby, while occupying the same position on the Federal Street side is a service entrance. On the floor above are unique variants of the Chicago window. The large, fixed center pane is nearly flush with the outer face of the building, but the flanking double hung windows are canted back into the depth of the building, suggesting the windows in the zone above, admitting a maximum of light to the space behind, providing a sense of depth for the base, and forming an architectonic counterpart to the soffits of the bay windows directly above.

These lower two floors are tied together by thin, limestone-clad piers with elegant, ornamental capitals. These complement the richly worked terra cotta soffits of the bay windows that swell out at the top of the second floor level. Further terra cotta enrichment is found at top of the building where the simple cornice survives intact.

The entire structure seems to be enclosed by giant corner piers that rise from low, rusticated limestone bases, but above the second floor the face of these piers is actually that of the brick skin.

The building is a workable, non-luxurious commercial building. The ground floor caters to street traffic, while the floors above have been adapted over the years to a number of office, commercial, and light industrial uses. Despite some interior alterations, many of the original oak doors and frames remain, as does much of the original, ornately patterned hardware. The upper floors are still served by two open cage elevators.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

- PREHISTORIC
- 1400-1499
- 1500-1599
- 1600-1699
- 1700-1799
- 1800-1899
- 1900-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

- ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
- ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC
- AGRICULTURE
- ARCHITECTURE
- ART
- COMMERCE
- COMMUNICATIONS
- COMMUNITY PLANNING
- CONSERVATION
- ECONOMICS
- EDUCATION
- ENGINEERING
- EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
- INDUSTRY
- INVENTION
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- LAW
- LITERATURE
- MILITARY
- MUSIC
- PHILOSOPHY
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- RELIGION
- SCIENCE
- SCULPTURE
- SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
- THEATER
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES

1891

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Holabird & Roche

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Completed in 1891, the Pontiac Building was designed by the important Chicago firm of Holabird and Roche as a commercial and light industrial building in the printing district south of Chicago's central business area. William Holabird (1854-1923) and Martin Roche (1855-1927) built a number of distinguished commercial buildings in Chicago's central area that exemplified the Chicago School of Architecture. This is their oldest surviving building, and it is significant both for that fact and for the excellence of its architectural design.

Their earlier Tacoma (1887-89) and Caxton (1889-90) Buildings have been destroyed, but the Pontiac survives to illustrate their approach to design. They sought to express the skeletal character of the structural framework and the independence of the skin that enclosed the volume of the building. Sited in an area typified by long, thin city blocks, the Pontiac's walls were opened to allow light to flood into the interior from its two long and single short street facades. Light (and extra rentable space) is captured by the bay windows that swell across two bays or project bluntly from a single bay. These protrusions are controlled by the firmness of the taught skin that is stretched around the broad corner piers. A minimum of ornament applied sparingly to key places accentuates the supports or the protrusions. The contrast between the swelling skin and the controlling corner piers introduces a quality that suggests the basic character of subsequent modern architecture which uses the counterplay of structure and skin as a dominant design motif, as, for example, in much of the Chicago work of Mies van der Rohe.

Holabird and Roche eventually turned to other ways of exploiting the contrast between structure and skin, leaving behind the fully developed lyrical expression that they had developed here on the basis of their experience with the Tacoma and Caxton Buildings.

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE ILLINOIS

Date Entered MAR 10 1976

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Pontiac Building	Chicago Cook County
Archer House Hotel	Marshall Clark County
Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral and Rectory	Chicago Cook County
Manhattan Building	Chicago Cook County
Fisher Building	Chicago Cook County

COPY OF CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

Also Notified

Hon. Charles H. Percy
Hon. Adlai E. Stevenson
Hon. Cardiss Collins
Hon. George E. Shipley
Hon. Dan Rostenkowski